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Activities not classified by field: harmonization of indicators and reporting on progress towards the millennium development goals

Harmonization of indicators and reporting on progress towards the millennium development goals

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report was prepared at the request of the Statistical Commission at its thirty-third session.[a] The report describes follow-up to the recommendations of the Friends of the Chair expert group on development indicators that were endorsed by the Statistical Commission at its last session in 2002. The report also describes the activities of the United Nations Statistics Division in the preparation of data and analysis for monitoring progress towards the achievement of the millennium development goals.

The Commission is invited to review the proposed terms of reference for the standing committee on development indicators (see annex I) and to comment on the proposed activities of the Division in support of monitoring progress towards the millennium development goals.

[a] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2002, Supplement No. 4* (E/2002/24), chap. 1.A.

* E/CN.3/2003/1.

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I. Introduction

1. In the past year, the work on harmonization and rationalization of development indicators within the United Nations system has focused on the set of millennium indicators. The formulation of the millennium indicator set has stimulated the ongoing dialogue among United Nations agencies on common methodologies and on collaboration in data compilation. The strength of the millennium indicator set is that it provides an agreed starting point for global monitoring of targets and goals that have now been universally endorsed at the highest level. The specificity of other sets of United Nations conference indicators remains important for more detailed monitoring in various policy areas. In this context, it is also important to note that a considerable effort was made to align the millennium development goals framework to existing indicator sets.

2. Recent work of the United Nations Statistics Division has primarily focused on two areas with respect to development indicators: (a) following-up the Economic and Social Council's mandate to harmonize and rationalize conference indicators, the Division worked on the implementation of the recommendations of the Friends of the Chair as approved at the last session of the Statistical Commission;[1] and (b) the Division took the lead in preparing for the Executive Office of the Secretary-General the statistical base material and analysis for the annual report on progress towards the millennium development goals.

3. Both processes are described in more detail in sections II and III below. Furthermore, a proposal is made to involve the Commission's Standing Advisory Committee on Development Indicators in the improvement of the meta-data for the millennium development goal indicators, thus establishing a connection between the two processes and addressing the concern voiced by the Commission at its thirty-third session about the coordination between the various indicator sets.[2]

II. Harmonization and rationalization of conference indicators

A. Background

4. At its substantive session of 2000, the Economic and Social Council reiterated its interest in the topic of statistical indicators to follow up major United Nations conferences and summits held in the 1990s. In its resolution 2000/27, the Council reaffirmed recommendations contained in an earlier resolution on indicators (see Council resolution 1999/55, sect. II) and took up many of its themes. Inter alia, the Council called for: (a) the need for statistical capacity-building; (b) the technical review of existing conference indicators and efforts to define a limited set; (c) the need for so-called "means of implementation" or "global partnership for development" indicators; and (d) the promotion of networking. The Council requested the Secretary-General to report to it on the implementation of resolution 2000/27 at its substantive session of 2002.

5. At its thirty-second session, the Commission accepted the invitation by the Council to serve as the intergovernmental focal point for the review of conference indicators and considered that work as a welcome opportunity to contribute its technical expertise to the ongoing debate on indicators.[3] In order to ensure that the statistical expertise of member States be fully applied, the Chairman of the

Commission appointed a Friends of the Chair advisory group to conduct an in-depth technical evaluation of all United Nations conference indicators.[4] In accordance with the Council mandate, the Friends of the Chair advisory group was also requested to elaborate recommendations for a limited list of indicators and to make proposals for a mechanism of statistical review for future indicators.

6. The Friends of the Chair advisory group reported back to the Commission at its thirty-third session (see E/CN.3/2002/26). The Commission considered the report, together with the report of the Secretary-General on the harmonization of development indicators (E/CN.3/2002/25) and a consultancy report entitled "Indicators on means of implementation". The Commission welcomed the report of the Friends of the Chair and was particularly satisfied with the broad consultative process it undertook among member States. It welcomed the indicator architecture built on three tiers and the technical evaluations contained on the United Nations Statistics Division web site and endorsed the recommendations made in the report. The Commission also concurred that in some areas (e.g., human rights and good governance indicators), the indicators currently proposed were mostly qualitative in nature and could therefore not be technically evaluated by the Friends of the Chair group. Therefore, in case a consensus among member States is reached to use such indicators, from a technical statistical point of view further work would be required to clarify concepts and methods.

7. Based on the report of the Friends of the Chair and the decisions taken at the thirty-third session of the Commission, the Division prepared a report for the Council (see E/2002/53).[5] To date, the Council had not yet concluded its consideration of the report.

B. Follow-up to the recommendations of the Friends of the Chair endorsed by the Commission

8. The recommendations contained in the report of the Friends of the Chair fall into three broad categories: (a) recommendations that require action by the United Nations Statistics Division; (b) recommendations that require action by other stakeholders; and (c) recommendations of a more general nature. One example for the latter is recommendation 16: "That if the data source supports an analysis by sex then this should be provided for all indicators". The paragraphs below describe the follow-up activities for recommendations that fall into the first two categories, giving particular attention to those that were highlighted by the Commission at its thirty-third session.

9. The Commission endorsed establishing a standing committee for indicators, supported by the Division as its secretariat (recommendation 6). In close collaboration with the Bureau of the Commission, the Division has developed provisional terms of reference and a list of 10 members for the Standing Advisory Committee on Development Indicators. Both are attached to the present report (see annexes I and II). All 10 members approached have agreed to participate in the Committee.

10. The main task of the proposed standing committee will be to periodically update the indicator framework provided in the Friends of the Chair report, in response to United Nations summits and major international conferences and taking into account development of indicators within international agencies and advances

in technical standards (recommendation 1). Now that the millennium development goals list of indicators has been finalized for United Nations Millennium Declaration follow-up reporting to the General Assembly, the full list should be included in tier 1 of the Friends of the Chair "Hierarchy of statistical indicators" (see E/CN.3/2002/26, table 1), with appropriate technical notes. The implications of the list for needed programmes of capacity-building in countries should also be considered. At the same time, it is recognized that the set of millennium development goals indicators will need to evolve in the short run and over time to take into account additional commitments made by member States. Currently, discussions are under way in the United Nations system on follow-up to the International Conference on Financing for Development, held in Monterrey, Mexico, in March 2002, and the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg, South Africa, in September 2002. The proposed standing committee should open a dialogue with the concerned stakeholders (United Nations system organizations, intergovernmental bodies and technical specialists) to review required and proposed indicators according to their technical merits. With respect to the Johannesburg Summit, the note by the Secretary-General on the World Summit on Sustainable Development and its possible implications for the work of the Statistical Commission (E/CN.3/2002/33) could provide a starting point.

11. It is furthermore suggested that the Committee re-examine the meta-data presented in the "Friends of the Chair" indicator meta-database hosted by the Division (see http://unstats.un.org/unsd/indicatorfoc) and advise the Division on how to best use its content to improve the newly created Division millennium indicator web site (see http://millenniumindicators.un.org). Improvement of the meta-database for the millennium indicators will not only enhance the transparency of the millennium indicators, but also help to clarify outstanding conceptual and methodological problems that still need to be addressed. Furthermore, comprehensive meta-data, including detailed conceptual and methodological notes, are helpful for countries that wish to assess and ultimately improve their capacity to compile specific indicators in the future.

12. In that context and in response to recommendation 14, the Commission will have before it a background note reporting on the availability of indicators in the highest two tiers. The report will include an assessment of what actions will be needed in the future to improve the worldwide coverage of those indicators. That analysis is meant to assist the debate on how to use scarce human and financial resources most effectively to support countries in their efforts to improve national statistical capacity.

III. Reporting on progress towards the millennium development goals

A. Background

13. In September 2000, 147 heads of State and Government and 189 nations adopted the Millennium Declaration. The objective of the Declaration is to promote a comprehensive approach and a coordinated strategy, tackling many problems simultaneously across a broad front. The General Assembly also mandated the Secretary-General, in its resolution 55/162, to prepare a comprehensive report every

five years, supplemented by an annual report on progress achieved towards implementing the Declaration.

14. To help track progress, the development experts of the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, as well as the International Monetary Fund, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank, derived from the Millennium Declaration a framework of measurable goals and targets for combating poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation and discrimination against women. The agency representatives, in consultation with other statistical experts, also proposed a set of indicators drawing on previous work on the United Nations Development Assistance Framework/ common country assessment indicators, for monitoring progress in relation to targets and goals as set out in the declaration (see A/56/326).

15. Subsequently, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in its capacity as chair of the United Nations Development Group, agreed to cooperate in preparing the quantitative assessments on developmental goals as a basis for the annual reports of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly. It was also decided that the United Nations Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs would be responsible for providing the statistical basis for a review of global progress towards the millennium development goals, while the United Nations Development Programme would support United Nations country teams to assist countries in preparing their national reports.

B. Global monitoring process

16. The Division and the Executive Office of the Secretary-General organized two inter-agency expert group meetings in New York in March and April 2002, bringing together experts from United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and from the International Monetary Fund, OECD and the World Bank (15 agencies were represented), as well as expert statisticians from selected countries. The experts at the two meetings reviewed the millennium development indicators in terms of their relevance to the targets and goals addressed, the availability of the necessary data, issues of data accuracy, concepts and definitions, geographical coverage, and consistency over time for the calculation/estimation of regional and global figures for the two benchmark years (1990 and 2000). Agencies agreed on a timetable and assignment of responsibilities for the preparation of regional and global figures and analysis of the data.

17. Based on the data and analysis provided by the agencies as well as discussion at the two inter-agency and expert group meetings, the Division prepared a report on millennium indicators for use as a basis for the Secretary-General's report to the General Assembly on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration (A/57/270; see also ST/ESA/STAT/120 and http://millenniumindicators.un.org).

18. Although the Secretary-General's report presents only regional and global data, the Division, in close cooperation with its partner agencies, also maintains the millennium indicator database, containing available country series of the indicators, as well as background series intended to supplement the basic 48 millennium indicators, for more in-depth analysis. The figures in the database are provided by the designated agencies and are those published in international sources — mostly

estimates or adjustments based on official international data-collection mechanisms from countries. The database is continuously updated and will form the basis for future reporting.

C. Improving data availability and quality

19. A prerequisite for effective global and national reporting is the availability of reliable and comparable country data for the compilation of the millennium development indicators. The limitations encountered in the data used for the 48 indicators can be categorized as follows:

- Gaps in international standards.
- Differences among countries in statistical standards used.
- Measurement problems linked to the nature of the phenomenon to be measured.
- Limitations and gaps in national statistical programmes in specific statistical areas.
- New statistical areas, with recent methodological development.

20. Some of the greatest problems of international standards seem to be manifest in the area of poverty measurement and the associated income and consumption surveys. In terms of measurement problems, significant gaps exist in wage employment and in employment data, although in that area international standards and recommendations are clear and are extensively documented in manuals and guidelines produced within the United Nations system. Existing standards are not always adequate to capture the different realities of working conditions in countries, especially in rural areas and in the informal sector. In terms of national programmatic capacities, there are many areas where gaps are evident, such as in vital registration systems (e.g., maternal, infant and child mortality data), administrative records of school enrolment and programmes for gathering environment data.

21. A necessary condition for the sustained improvement of available statistics for millennium development goals indicators, and for development indicators in general, is the strengthening of countries' statistical capacity. The millennium development goals indicators focus can be used to identify specific, key programmatic gaps for attention, including, for example, income and consumption surveys which provide the needed income data for poverty estimation according to various methodologies; purchasing power parities; health and epidemiological surveys in many areas (17 of the millennium development goals indicators are health or health-related); primary school retention and completion surveys; environmental indicators from various sources; trade analysis capability; and labour force surveys.

22. The preparation of the millennium development goals country reports, coordinated by UNDP, provides an opportunity to help build national capacity for the production, analysis and dissemination of data. The Division has discussed with UNDP ways of collaboration, including Division assistance in the preparation of millennium development goals country reports in selected countries, and the participation of the Division in the training workshops held by UNDP to assist

country teams in the preparation of national reports. The Division also sees that collaboration as an opportunity to assess countries' statistical needs and to keep millennium development goals reporting closely linked to national statistical programmes.

23. Finally, the country-based information compiled and analysed by United Nations country teams will be used as additional input — in addition to international sources — for the report to the General Assembly.

IV. Future work

24. The Division will:

(a) Provide secretariat services to the Standing Advisory Committee on Development Indicators;

(b) Focus on the following with respect to millennium development goals indicators: (i) coordinating the work on data compilation and analysis for the global reporting on progress towards the millennium development goals, (ii) promoting further dialogue among agencies and with countries on the methodological development and establishment of international standards, where needed, and (iii) providing technical assistance to countries, in cooperation with United Nations country teams;

(c) Maintain the process for the preparation of the 2002 global report on progress towards the achievement of the millennium development goals since it has been proven effective. An inter-agency expert group meeting is planned for March/April 2003 to ensure full participation and effective coordination among partner agencies. The meeting will review the current status of available data necessary for the compilation of the millennium indicators and discuss the methodological work needed on some areas;

(d) Continue its work to maintain and regularly update the millennium indicators web site at http://millenniumindicators.un.org. In order to ensure consistency between figures used for global monitoring, those presented in the country series on the Division web site and those contained in other United Nations system agencies' databases, the Division will continue to promote and facilitate a dialogue on those issues among partner agencies.

V. Points for discussion

25. The Commission may wish to:

(a) Review the proposed terms of reference for the Standing Advisory Committee on Development Indicators (see annex I);

(b) Comment on the proposed Division activities in support of monitoring progress towards the millennium development goals.

Notes

[1] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, Supplement No. 4* (E/2002/24), para. 66 (b).

[2] Ibid., para. 66 (e).

[3] Ibid., para. 45 (a).

[4] For that purpose, the United Nations Statistics Division had compiled from United Nations documents a list of approximately 280 indicators which were being used, or which were proposed to be used, in the context of follow-up to United Nations conferences and summits.

[5] The report is available on the Economic and Social Council web site at http://www.un.org/esa/coordination/ecosoc/document.htm.

Annex I

Terms of reference for the Standing Advisory Committee on Development Indicators

Background

1. In its resolution 2000/27, the Economic and Social Council requested the Statistical Commission, as its authoritative technical advisory body, to:

- Provide leadership in the field of conference indicators.
- Conduct an in-depth technical analysis of conference indicators.
- Make recommendations regarding a limited list of conference indicators.
- Develop and recommend to the Council a mechanism of statistical review for future proposed indicators.

2. As a result, at its thirty-second session, the Commission established a Friends of the Chair group to consider those issues further and report to it thereon at its thirty-third session. The group was led by Professor Tim Holt (United Kingdom), and its final report (E/CN.3/2002/26) contained 31 recommendations (see http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/sc2002.htm). Inter alia, the report recommended that the Commission "establish a standing committee to take responsibility for indicator issues and to act on behalf of the Commission between meetings to ensure that no undue delay occurs". The Commission welcomed the report and endorsed the recommendations made in it, in particular the recommendation on "establishing a standing committee for indicators, supported by the United Nations Statistics Division as the secretariat. That would enable the Commission and the regional and the national statistics systems to remain engaged in a dialogue with international, regional and national policy makers, and in particular to be involved at an early stage in the future development of new indicators."

Tasks

3. The Committee will maintain the framework provided by the Friends of the Chair's report. This includes: (a) establishing new indicators in response to future United Nations conferences and summits; (b) keeping under review the proposed hierarchical framework and priorities; and (c) reviewing and refining existing indicators over time. In particular, the Division, in close cooperation with the lead policy officials and as a result of the consultation process recommended in paragraph 100 of the Friends of the Chair's report, will prepare recommendations for the Committee. The Committee may request its secretariat to investigate certain related issues and prepare a brief report. The Committee will review those recommendations and either act on behalf of the Commission or itself prepare recommendations for the Commission, as appropriate. In that process, the Committee will take care that the criteria for selecting indicators that were developed by the Friends of the Chair (paras. 52-55 of the Friends of the Chair report) are being applied. Furthermore, the Committee will be responsible for the periodic review and improvement of all statistical indicators, and when such a review results in change, should provide an approach to support countries in moving to the improved indicator while maintaining continuity with the recent past. Those

periodic reviews of individual statistical indicators within the framework should be included within the appropriate work programmes of statistical review and revision that are regularly reported to the Commission.

4. The Committee will continuously improve the United Nations Statistics Division meta-data web site http://unstats.un.org/unsd/indicatorfoc/ and pay particular attention to the health and nutrition indicators.

Administrative issues

5. The Committee will conduct all its business electronically and will be supported by the Division, which will act as its secretariat.

6. The Committee will provide ad hoc reports to the Commission either at the request of the Commission or on its own initiative.

7. The Commission may review and change the membership of the Committee at each session.

Annex II

Proposed list of members for the Standing Advisory Committee on Development Indicators

Australia

Brazil

Hungary

Indonesia

Italy

Malaysia

Norway

Palestine

South Africa

United Kingdom

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Status of millennium development goal country reporting

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the Statistical Commission the report of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on the status of millennium development goal country reporting. The report is transmitted to the Commission in accordance with a request of the Statistical Commission at its thirty-third session.[1] Points for discussion are included in paragraphs 10, 12 and 16.

* E/CN.3/2003/1.

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I. Background

1. In 2002, the Secretary-General issued his first annual report on progress in implementing the Millennium Declaration. It provides a global perspective on the status of the millennium development goals, based on internationally agreed indicators and using global and regional databases available within the United Nations system. Global monitoring of the millennium development goals is important for keeping actors accountable to agreed commitments but it does not necessarily identify development priorities or monitor progress in each individual country. Each country must set and implement its own priorities within the given framework of the millennium development goals.

2. The millennium development goals express the political consensus reached during the world summits and global conferences of the 1990s, reaffirmed at the Millennium Summit, held in 2000. They do not represent equally ambitious or feasible targets for all countries. For the millennium development goals to be meaningful at the national level, targets need to be tailored to reflect national circumstances and development priorities.

3. For the United Nations to play its role as millennium development goal "score-keeper" and "campaign manager" at the country level, UNDP is promoting and supporting the preparation of millennium development goal reports by national or subnational authorities, in very close coordination with the United Nations Development Group (UNDG). The millennium development goal country reports are a vehicle for keeping the national focus on agreed development priorities, keeping the public informed on progress, fostering debate and dialogue and triggering action to meet the tailored millennium development goal targets in each country. Millennium development goal country reports also provide the platform for improving donor coordination around nationally defined priorities. In October 2001, UNDG issued a guidance note on "Reporting on the millennium development goals at the country level" (available at www.undg.org).

II. Millennium development goal country reports

4. So far, 17 countries have issued millennium development goal reports: Albania, Armenia, Bolivia, Cambodia, Cameroon, Chad, Guatemala, Kazakhstan, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Nepal, Poland, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, United Republic of Tanzania and Viet Nam (available at www.undg.org and www.undp.org). About another 50 are under preparation (see annex). The plan is for every developing and transition country to produce at least one millennium development goal country report by the end of 2004, in time for the Secretary-General's comprehensive review of the millennium development goal progress in 2005.

5. Millennium development goal country reports help to benchmark indicators, to identify national achievements and to address challenges and obstacles. They are vehicles for converting global goals into nationally agreed targets that balance ambition with realism. Over-ambitious targets are not likely to trigger action but rather add to scepticism and negativity, while non-challenging targets are unlikely to help to mobilize resources or foster pro-poor policy reforms. Nationally defined targets that reflect local circumstances are a way to balance ambition with feasibility and to build a grand coalition for action.

6. The preparation of millennium development goal reports should provide the opportunity to build national ownership around well-defined and pertinent targets. The first millennium development goal country reports were prepared and issued by the United Nations country team. More recent ones have been published jointly by the Government and the United Nations country team. The objective is to engage civil society organizations and academia in future millennium development goal reports. The first millennium development goal country reports contained rather mechanistic reporting on the global targets. More recent ones report on targets that have been tailored to what is relevant and realistic given the local circumstances and considering recent trends.

7. Tailored targets can only be set through an inclusive process of consultation and dialogue within the country. The United Nations can contribute to this process in two ways: by helping to create the space for such political consultations among the main actors, and by providing essential information so that all actors at the table can meaningfully participate in the debate for setting tailored millennium development goal targets.

8. Millennium development goal reports should be concise, attractive, easy-to-read and non-technical reports. They should contain clear messages, using simple graphical illustrations and colour maps. They should be issued in the local language(s) and not only in English. The reports are not the place for deep analysis or specific policy prescriptions, but for spelling out the current level and recent trend for each millennium development goal target. Their main purpose is to inform the wider public about how the country, the provinces and districts, different socio-economic and ethnic or gender groups are doing vis-à-vis agreed targets. If widely publicized and shared within the country, these reports will help to build a stronger constituency for these noble targets. They are also likely to foster collective action to narrow the remaining gaps and close disparities within the country.

9. Millennium development goal country reports should be based on existing data and analyses, contained in documents such as national development plans, poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs), national human development reports and the common country assessments. Millennium development goal reports should not establish a parallel process for data-gathering and analyses.

III. The choice of indicators

10. Achieving the millennium development goals will depend on the adoption of national policies consistent with agreed targets within the aspirations of the Millennium Declaration. Global reporting on the millennium development goals is based on 48 internationally agreed indicators that represent the best use of data sources validated by specialized international organizations. The choice of some progress indicators at the national level might, in some cases, need to be supplemented and/or adapted to reflect national priorities and data availability. Monitoring the education goal, for instance, can include indicators on the quality of education and the percentage of children who complete primary school apart from the agreed millennium development goal indicators of the net enrolment ratio and the proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach grade 5.

11. Nationally agreed targets should be expressed in the choice of nationally relevant indicators to monitor progress, and those indicators should be consistent

with national development policies. For countries that have formulated a PRSP, the choice of millennium development goal indicators must be consistent with indicators used to monitor PRSP goals and targets, and PRSP targets in turn should provide the intermediate means to monitor millennium development goal progress.

12. The United Nations Statistical Commission may wish to consider the need to keep some degree of flexibility to reflect national priorities and specific circumstances vis-à-vis the need to harmonize the use of indicators for global millennium development goal monitoring.

13. The millennium development goal country reports primarily address a national audience, with a clear focus on progress at the subnational level. In a sense, they help bring the millennium development goals "home". For too long, global goals and targets have remained at the global and intergovernmental levels; in too many instances, they did not make a difference in terms of policy-making, resources allocations or institutional changes at the national and subnational levels. In order to spur progress, millennium development goal work needs to focus on the national and subnational levels more than on the regional and global levels. Therefore, millennium development goal country reports focus on disaggregated data to highlight trends and disparities within the country. Disaggregation from the national level down is more important for a millennium development goal report than the concern with aggregation of national data to the regional and global levels. Global and regional databases exist independently from the millennium development goal reports and follow separate processes for updating and maintenance. The role of the millennium development goal country reports is not to service these global and regional databases. Millennium development goal reports are primarily for advocacy and communications, not for enhancing statistical rigour and accuracy.

14. In particular, the United Nations Statistical Commission may wish to consider the following two issues:

(a) The indicator to monitor the first global target of halving income-poverty between 1990 and 2015 is based on the international poverty line of one dollar a day expressed in purchasing power parity of 1985. This methodology provides a mechanism for making poverty comparisons across regions and for estimating global poverty levels and trends. They do not necessarily reflect conditions in specific countries. The relevance of $1/day as a poverty indicator for middle-income countries has also been questioned. In order to assess the incidence of income-poverty in individual countries, an allowance must be made to define a nationally relevant poverty line that reflects country-specific conditions and the level of resources needed to provide minimum acceptable living standards for its citizens, in line with the country's level of development. The United Nations Statistical Commission may wish to consider specific guidance on the use of the national poverty line for monitoring the first millennium development goal target. It may also wish to examine ways to improve the reliability of purchasing power parity conversion rates and their relevance for poverty monitoring;

(b) The indicators to monitor goal 8 (develop a global partnership for development) represents another challenge at the country level. Although the emphasis of millennium development goal reports is to monitor goals 1 through 7, achievement of these goals is contingent on the international conditions in the areas of aid, trade, debt relief and access to technology. The United Nations Statistical Commission may wish to consider the need for specific guidance to adapt the

internationally agreed indicators to monitor goal 8 into indicators that can be monitored and reported nationally as a way to assess progress towards the millennium development goals as a "global deal" and to monitor the international efforts and opportunities faced by individual countries. Tracking the indicators under goal 8 at the national level would also help countries to develop better development partnerships and coordination of donor resources.

IV. Development of statistical capacity

15. The millennium development goals provide a long-term development framework to keep the eyes of the world focused on a consistent set of goals, targets and indicators to monitor progress around numerical and time-bound targets that collectively address the many dimensions of human development. Monitoring the millennium development goals over the next 13 years will require sustained efforts to respond to the growing demand for data to inform the general public and policy makers, as well as the development community.

16. Millennium development goal monitoring provides an opportunity to develop statistical capacity within countries to improve the production and use of consistent and internationally validated data to assess results. The millennium development goal country reports include a table entitled "Capacity at a glance". For each of the targets, it indicates the existing capacity for different aspects of the monitoring process, including data gathering, data quality, data analysis, and the use of statistics in policy-making. The science behind the selection of one of the three levels of capacity (strong, fair or weak) is not perfect, but it helps national authorities and interested donor agencies to focus on relative capacity levels and to prioritize operational support.

17. Too many countries remain trapped in a vicious cycle of low demand for data, lack of resources and national efforts to produce quality data and thus lack of good data sources to design and monitor pro-poor policy reforms. The millennium development goals provide an opportunity to break that cycle by creating a consistent, long-term demand for good quality, timely and relevant data for making policy decisions, coordinating the use of available resources, identifying financial and institutional constraints to achieving results, and using statistics to keep the general public informed and interested.

18. Greater efforts to coordinate capacity development for millennium development goal monitoring and analysis will be required in order to improve the quality and timeliness of statistical data sources according to internationally approved guidelines and recommendations. Harmonization in the use of national and international indicators will require strong leadership and longer-term investment in the development of sound statistical systems and capacities. The United Nations Statistical Commission may wish to consider the following issue:

Practical ways are needed to improve the investment of national authorities and donor agencies in statistical capacity development. One critically important element will be the enhancement of the operational collaboration and coordination among the many actors and agencies in this field. The challenge is to establish specific mechanisms that will reduce fragmentation in support of nationally owned and locally driven efforts without imposing rigid and bureaucratically heavy structures that stifle innovation and creativity.

Notes

[1] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2002, Supplement No. 4* (E/2002/24), chap I, sect. A.

Annex

Millennium development goal country reporting*

A. Published — as of end November 2002

Albania (English)
Armenia (English)
Bolivia (English and Spanish)
Cambodia (Khmer and English)
Cameroon (French and English)
Chad (French)
Guatemala (Spanish)
Kazakhstan (Russian and English)
Madagascar (French)
Mauritius (English)
Mozambique (English)
Nepal (Nepali and English)
Poland (Polish and English)
Saudi Arabia (English and Arabic)
Senegal (French)
United Republic of Tanzania (English)
Viet Nam (English)

B.

Country	*Date expected*
Algeria	January 2003
Argentina	May 2003
Azerbaijan	Mid-2003
Bahrain	March 2003
Barbados	2003
Bhutan	Late 2002
Bulgaria	End 2002
Central African Republic	Late 2002
Chile	March 2003
China	Late 2002
Djibouti	April 2003
Egypt	End 2002

* Available at www.undg.org and www.undp.org.

Country	*Date expected*
Georgia	Early 2004
Guyana	End 2002
Jamaica	2003
Jordan	March 2003
Kazakhstan	November 2002
Kuwait	Mid-2003
Kyrgyzstan	End 2002
Lao People's Democratic Republic	Early 2003
Latvia	July 2003
Lebanon	December 2002
Lesotho	November 2002
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Early 2003
Lithuania	Early 2003
Mongolia	November 2002
Morocco	Early 2003
Nicaragua	January 2003
Pakistan	Second half of 2002
Paraguay	Late 2002
Philippines	Late 2002
Republic of Moldova	End 2002
Romania	November 2002
Russian Federation	November 2003
Somalia	Early 2003
South Africa	End 2002
Sudan	End 2003
Syrian Arab Republic	End 2002
Tajikistan	Early 2003
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	End 2003
Togo	Mid-2003
Trinidad and Tobago	2003
Tunisia	June 2003
Turkey	Early 2004
Turkmenistan	Late 2002
Ukraine	End 2002

Country	*Date expected*
United Arab Emirates	June 2003
Uruguay	Early 2003
Uzbekistan	Early 2003
Yemen	November 2002
Yugoslavia	Early 2003